

PEOPLE & THINGS By ATTICUS

ALTHOUGH there is no official confirmation that Princess Margaret is going to America at the end of the year, a friend in Washington close to the Pentagon sends me this story.

For many years now the Pentagon has supplied an eminent general to act as honorary "Grand Marshal" of the annual football game at the Pasadena Rose Bowl, near Hollywood, between the universities of the Middle West and the Pacific coast, which takes place on New Year's Day.

Planning ahead, they recently inquired whether the usual general would be required next New Year's Day. They were told that the next "Grand Marshal" would be Princess Margaret.

Although I was unable to confirm this at Buckingham Palace an official there told me that he has heard "several rumours" that Princess Margaret may be visiting Alberta about Christmas—near enough to fit the Pasadena event into the time-table.

Sausage or Tyre?

HOW remarkably well the Atomic Energy Authority has succeeded in staking a claim for Britain as the first country to make a thermo-nuclear reactor work, without making any official statement.

Interpreting the classification rules between Britain, Canada and the United States which limit the release of atomic information seems to be becoming quite a game of skill in Harwell, and the higher you go the more fascinating it becomes.

Dr. J. D. Lawson and Sir George Thomson, speaking to the British Association meeting

in Dublin, closed their lips when asked whether "Zeta," the thermo-nuclear reactor, was shaped like a sausage or a bicycle tyre. It was too secret to say.

But the following week Sir John Cockcroft's interpretation in Paris gave it all away. He told his listeners what they could have read in *THE SUNDAY TIMES* a fortnight previously, that "Zeta" is like an overgrown tyre.

What nonsense this secrecy is. "Zeta" is the first step towards a power station which extracts its fuel from the sea. It has no military implications. Why we and the Americans should be so much less forthcoming than the Russians about this sort of work puzzles me. It seems to puzzle most of the people working on it at Harwell, too.

But even Sir John, I am told, had second thoughts in Paris the other day. In his pocket was a lantern-slide of "Zeta," but he decided he could not show it.

King's Corner

KING HAAKON, during the war, spent much of his leisure time at the United Service Club (the Senior) whose hospitality he, Prince Olaf and their staff accepted. After lunch they would generally collect for coffee in a favourite corner of the smoking room which came to be called "Norwegian Corner."

Before they returned home they presented the club with a portrait of King Haakon, which now hangs in the coffee room.

At the very informal presentation on the club's staircase the King typically summed up the happy arrangement. "When you first invited

me to use the club," he said, "I was a little troubled because I did not know anything about the etiquette of an English club. But when I found myself with an English admiral on either side, conducted to a table, given a drink and told to make myself at home, I soon found there was no etiquette about an English club."

"Since then I have been left alone to come and go just as I pleased, to have my lunch, to write my letters or to read the papers. You all know who I am, but you make no fuss. You treat me just as if I were a human being."

Cut and Cut Again

JOHN BRAINE, the thirty-five-year-old Yorkshireman whose "Room at the Top" bowled over the critics last March, tells me he is hard at work on a new novel. It will be called "The Vodi"—an



JOHN BRAINE

imaginary organisation dedicated to the furtherance of injustice."

He took the brave step of throwing up his job as a librarian when his book hit the "jacket," and works each day from nine till one and from two till five-thirty.

He says that if he can produce 500 printable words in a day he is well satisfied; but he will have thrown some 5,000 away. He always writes the last chapter first: "Then I know what I'm working towards."

How have his Yorkshire friends taken his success? "They're all very pleased," he says, "especially my fellow-librarians. People think of them as rather ineffectual writers *manqués*, so in a way I've salvaged their honour."

His favourite modern novels are all American: Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby," J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye," and John O'Hara's "Appointment in Samara." His own new book should be finished by next summer.

The manuscript will contain 160,000 words—pruned from the one and a half million he will have written—and will then be cut again to 80,000 words. "Everything is better for cutting."

Brothers in Law

"A FAR better lawyer than I am," is Sir Hartley's verdict on his brother, Christopher Shawcross, Q.C., whose adventures in Ghana have been followed with such interest. "His greatest misfortune was having me for a brother—one Shawcross in the law is quite enough."

From the days when Christopher learned to sail with Hartley on Poole Harbour, his career has followed his elder brother's with remarkable precision.

He followed him through Dulwich College. Four years after Hartley Shawcross took first place in the Bar finals, Christopher Shawcross did so, too. As M.P. for Widnes from 1945 to 1950 he had the neighbouring constituency to his brother at St. Helens. Both have been elected benchers of Gray's Inn.

Since the war Christopher

Shawcross, who became Recorder of Nottingham in 1950, has greatly extended his practice, and it was whilst conducting an inquiry for B.O.A.C. in Singapore in 1954 that he was wounded by Communist bandits.

Cigars in His Socks

MY congratulations to Sir Tom O'Brien, who this month celebrates twenty-five years as general secretary of the Theatre and Cinema Workers' Union.

When he took office there were only 1,800 members of his union; now there are more than 60,000. He is, of course, M.P. for Nottingham West, and a past president of the T.U.C. But he has achieved a wider fame through a series of unconventional and generous gestures. One recalls his defiant friendship with Sir Winston Churchill, about which he was particularly ostentatious after being criticised by horrified Left-wingers.

He learnt to look after himself at an early age. At fifteen he was fighting on the beaches of Gallipoli, having enlisted under a false age at fourteen. Returning home with fever, he was honourably discharged when his real age was discovered. One can hardly think of a more suitable officer for a theatrical trade union than Sir Tom, with his Irish blood and his by no means untheatrical background.

I asked him about reports that he kept his cigars in the top of his socks. "Certainly," he said. "It is both more convenient and safer. I find cigar cases too bulky, and if I keep them in my pocket they break. Sometimes when I suddenly produce one with a flourish people think I am a conjurer."

Et tu, Tuatse?

ONE would have thought that the time when the youthful Orson Welles broadcast "The War of the Worlds" over the Columbia network, and terrified half America about a Martian invasion, had cured the world of taking its science fiction too seriously.

But last week I heard the tale of a parallel from the newly S.F.-conscious U.S.S.R. A local newspaper in the small Black Sea town of Tuatse recently began serialising a story which opened with a Soviet astronomer discovering a new moon in the heavens.

Anxiously Tuatse awaited the second instalment. It read, to its horror, that the moon had turned into a "flaming sun" which was rushing towards the earth at 200,000 miles an hour. Primly the author then proceeded to dilate on the panic that seized the bourgeois world. Unhappily Tuatse took fright too. Homes were deserted, cattle was sold at bargain prices, and "simpletons began whispering that the end of the world was in sight and reminding each other that the Bible said we had only forty days to live."

It took the final instalment, with a Russian scientist destroying the satellite a mere two hours before it was due to land somewhere south of Moscow, to restore Tuatse to normality.

People and Words

Freedom of speech is a necessity in the practice of democracy—but every freedom has its limits.

—MR. EDUSEI, Ghana's Minister of the Interior.

It is about time that someone debunked music—so many people think it such a serious business.

—MR. ARTHUR BENJAMIN.

Pearls always remind me of brides' tears and rice pudding.

—MR. NORMAN HARTNELL.

I hate horses—they are uncom-
fortable in the middle and dan-
gerous at both ends.

—MR. CHRISTOPHER STONE.